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INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Hidden economies of slavery

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Abstract

This special issue addresses the concealment of slavery and other forms of coerced labour. It brings together contributions from scholars working on different regions and time periods between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. The starting point is the observation that in the wake of abolitionism and imperial anti-slavery rhetoric, persisting areas of slavery and coerced labour became increasingly hidden. The term "hidden economies" helps to identify those areas that have been (and often still are) less visible for a variety of reasons, be it the development of shadow economies around them, the opacity of increasingly complex global supply chains, the remoteness of the region concerned, or the marginalisation of the economic sectors involved.

Keywords: slavery; coerced labour; capitalism; abolitionism; hidden economies

Introduction

The transatlantic slave trade has left a multitude of material and immaterial traces in many regions of the world, yet much of the population is unaware of this legacy, partly because this part of history has been left out or deliberately kept secret to this day. The artist Grada Kilomba, for instance, with the installation of a slave ship at the 2021 Bienal de Arte Contemporáneo criticized the fact that Lisbon has monuments for explorers, but not to the history of the transatlantic slave trade.[1] Ulrike Schmieder has described the politics of concealment in her recent study of sites of memory, using case studies from Spain, France, Martinique, and Cuba.[2] This special issue follows a similar approach, but traces back concealment to the late period of slavery and abolition in the long nineteenth century. It deals with the "hidden economies" of slavery and addresses different dimensions and practices of its concealment, whether it be through smuggling and the evolvement of shadow economies, the remoteness of the (work) place and gender divisions, or the parallelism of slavery and new forms of coercive labour. The articles show the importance of acknowledging the contribution of the different groups of enslaved and coerced labourers

[1] Emi Eleode, "Artist Creates 'Slave Ship' Installation in Lisbon to Spark Debate Around Portugal's History of Colonialism," *The Art Newspaper*, 3 September 2021, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/09/03/artist-creates-slave-ship-installation-in-lisbon-to-spark-debate-around-portugals-history-of-colonialism.

[2] Ulrike Schmieder, *Versklavung im Atlantischen Raum: Orte des Gedenkens, Orte des Verschweigens in Frankreich und Spanien, Martinique und Kuba, Berlin* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024). She emphasises the intentionality of this concealment.

involved to the development of local, regional, and global economies (a) for gaining a better understanding of the period of "second slavery", and (b) for enabling a more inclusive commemoration of the long end of slavery and those affected by its "hidden economies".

The project emerged out of a workshop held at the German Historical Institute London in 2021 and brings together scholarship that has developed to some extent separately within different disciplines. Drawing on various world regions and different groups of people affected, the contributions in this special issue aim for a more nuanced understanding of slavery and labour relations.

Hidden trade

The transatlantic slavery business was at the centre of a commercial system with global reach. At its height in the eighteenth century, it forcibly connected local economies in various parts of Africa, the Americas, Europe, and even Asia. In the nineteenth century, the abolition of the slave trade and slavery came about in many cases not through radical shifts, but rather through smalls steps in a long process of ending these practices. Local economies often continued to rely on slavery, and private as well as state actors carried on operating, or investing in, ventures based on slave labour, though less openly. Although the end of the slave trade had been a condition of the new world order since the Congress of Vienna, the transatlantic slave trade between 1815 and 1850 reached its historical peak. The historian Michael Zeuske, who has studied the rise of the new commodity frontiers in the context of the illegal slave trade to Cuba in the nineteenth century, speaks of a hidden Atlantic of slave traders, which has long been neglected in historiography and memory culture because of the discourse of the nineteenth century as the age of abolition.[3] We use the term *hidden* rather than *illegal* because we do not want to work with a simple opposition between legal and illegal markets, but rather emphasise the connections between them.[4] There has been some exciting recent writing on this topic attempting to question how markets and the hidden features of capitalism are generally conceptualized.[5] The sociologist Manuela Boatcă argues that the crisis of capitalism in recent decades has brought other forms of labour to the forefront of research, even in the centres of the global economy.[6]

As a starting point, we take the observation that in the wake of abolitionism and imperial anti-slavery rhetoric, persisting areas of slavery and coercive labour became increasingly hidden. The notion of "hidden economies" helps to identify such areas that were (and often still are in historiography) less visible for a variety of reasons, be it because shadow economies developed around them or due to the opacity of increasingly complex global supply chains, the remoteness of the affected region, or the marginalisation of the economic sectors involved. However, another kind of hidden economy also developed in all areas to varying degrees, which still receives far too little attention but which was of great importance for the operation of the various slave systems. Here, we refer to small markets

[3] Michael Zeuske, "Out of the Americas. Sklavenhändler und Hidden Atlantic im 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Forschungsprojekt am Historischen Seminar der Universität zu Köln," *AHF Jahrbuch der historischen Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (2009), 37–57, https://web.archive.org/web/20120131172455/http://www.ahf-muenchen.de/Forschungsberichte/Jahrbuch2009/AHF_Jb2009_Zeuske.pdf; Michael Zeuske, *Sklavenhändler, Negreros und Atlantikkreolen: Eine Weltgeschichte des Sklavenhandels im atlantischen Raum* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015).

[4] Kenneth Lipartito and Lisa Jacobson, "Introduction: Mapping the Shadowlands of Capitalism, in *Capitalism's Hidden Worlds* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, 2).

[5] Brian P. Luskey and Wendy A. Woloson, eds., *Capitalism by Gaslight: Illuminating the Economy of Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Lipartito and Jacobson, *Capitalism's Hidden Worlds*.

[6] Manuela Boatcă, "Globale Ungleichheiten *avant la lettre*: Theoretische Genealogien und radikale Kritik", *Peripherie* 167/168:42 (2022), 256–76, 260.

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and forms of commerce often devalued as marginal in contrast to the large commodity chains, but which are also important for the history of capitalism.[7] They thus created the foundation of the global economy's functioning and at the same time shaped and changed societies on a cultural scale. These have been long ignored in the research because these activities, taking place in the shadow of capitalism, are extremely difficult to trace in archives.

Hidden capital and industrialisation

The fast-growing field of slavery history has gained a more inclusive profile in recent years as researchers from different research areas and world regions have sought to identify commonalities but also different forms and practices of slavery in different historical formations and times. In this context, regions and epochs that had previously received less attention have also found their way into the focus of researchers.[8] A central theme of slavery research continues to be transatlantic slavery and the significance of plantation economies for the development of industrial capitalism.[9] The abolition of the slave trade (1807) and the abolition of slavery (1833) in the British Empire (followed, and sometimes preceded, by other countries), led to significant geographic shifts in the Atlantic slavery system. Cuba, Brazil, and the southern United States came to the fore as key areas for slave-labour-based production. Other regions, such as Mozambique and the Western Indian Ocean, only now grew into major areas for both the "export" of enslaved people and the domestic exploitation of enslaved labour. Based on quantitative and qualitative research, it has been shown that the slave trade in individual regions did not end with the official prohibition of the slave trade but continued in secret as slave smuggling, as a result of which people in their millions continued to be shipped to become plantation slaves.

This smuggling brought great profits, and in certain regions the cultivation of commodities such as sugar, cotton and coffee was intensified due to increasing demand. How to assess this shift is an ongoing debate in slavery studies. Some researchers regard the transformation as so central that they speak of a "second slavery." The concept of second slavery was first introduced by the sociologist Dale Tomich in the 1980s and has made a comeback in recent years in the examination of slavery as an integral part of industrial capitalism.[10] Methodologically, this line of research borrows from a world-systems perspective that sees capitalism as a "matter of the world economy, not nation-states."[11] Eric Williams first recognised the interconnections between the continuation of slavery in the Caribbean and industrialisation in Britain.[12] Following this approach, free labour was seen as being at the centre and unfree labour was located at the periphery.

[7] Luske and Woloson, *Capitalism by Gaslight*, 2-4; on the importance of food markets for feeding the "second slavery," see Melina Teubner, *Die «zweite Sklaverei» ernähren, Sklavenschiffsköche und Straßenverkäuferinnen im Südatlantik (1800-1870)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2021).

[8] This literature is unfathomably large. For a comprehensive bibliographical overview, we refer the reader to Michael Zeuske, *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei. Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2013).

[9] On the significance of slavery for the development of industrialisation and economic transformation in Britain, see Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity, 2023).

[10] Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Dale W. Tomich, "The Second Slavery and World Capitalism: A Perspective for Historical Inquiry", *International Review of Social History* 63 (2018), 477–501.

[11] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System," in *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: New Press, 2000), 71–105; cf. Boatcă, "Globale Ungleichheiten," 256–76, 260.

[12] Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

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Tâmis PARRON offers a brief introduction to current debates on slavery and capitalism in his contribution to this issue.[13] Central to studies of second slavery is the plantation and its production of various commodities. Microhistorical studies have shown the extent to which better organisation of the plantation and modernisation in various areas led to a massive increase in the amount of work per slave in the nineteenth century, and how profits were in turn invested in the technical modernisation of the plantation.[14] However, exactly how second slavery was linked to capitalism requires further research.[15] Parron argues that capital in particular has so far been obscured as a category of historical analysis. By bringing this hidden dimension to the surface, he shows the extent to which the Industrial Revolution expanded commodity cycles in both the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, thereby changing the status of slavery in the British Empire and ultimately leading to its decline. He thus focuses on the material relations between the crisis of slavery and the Industrial Revolution in the British Empire, impressively highlighting the global interconnections between capital, labour, and consumption. He illustrates his theoretical considerations with the empirical example of Britain's sugar laws, thus linking research on slavery with research on expanding food regimes. This new conjunction was crucial to the crisis of slavery in the West Indies; to the rise of slavery in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil; and to the advance of neo-imperialism in the East. Parron's contribution is thus also a stimulus for further research to rethink the history of slavery on a global scale and its position in larger contexts of hidden economies.

Moral distance and hidden economies

Parron analyses the transformation within the capitalist world-economy. From this perspective, globalisation may appear as a "shrinking" of the world. However, if we look at early modern globalisation with the Atlantic plantation economy at its core, it primarily meant a widening of the spaces of commercial interaction and (coercive) labour mobility. Distance was a key issue, physically, socially, and morally. For the more than twelve million Africans who were enslaved and deported to the Americas, if they survived the months-long "middle passage," displacement was part of the "social death" (Orlando Patterson) they were confronted with. For the critics of the transatlantic slave trade, distance presented a challenge: it was more difficult to create consciousness in consumers who never saw the sites of exploitation and suffering.[16] Africa and the Caribbean plantations were far away for the vast majority of European and North American consumers, which is why abolitionists relied

[13] For a more comprehensive bibliographical overview, we refer the reader to Stephan Conerman and Michael Zeuske, "Introduction", *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 30:5/6 (2020), 448–64.

[14] Rafael de Bivar Marquese, "Visuality and Slave Management in the Brazilian and Cuban Coffee and Sugar Plantations, c. 1840–1880," *Comparativ | Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 30:5/6 (2020), 615–37; Dale W. Tomich et al., eds., *Reconstructiing the Landscapes of Slavery: A Visual History of the Plantation in the Nineteenth Century Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); D. W. Tomich and R. Funes Monzote, "Naturaleza, tecnología y esclavitud en Cuba: Frontera azucarera y Revolución industrial, 1815–1870," in *Trabajo libre y trabajo coactivo en sociedades de plantación*, ed. J. A. Piqueras (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España, 2009), 75–117; M. García Rodríguez, "Azúcar y Modernidad: La experimentación tecnológica de la oligarquía habanera: 1700–1820," *Revista de Indias* 72:256 (2012), 743–70; Daniel B. Rood, "A Creole Revolution in the Cuban Sugar Mill," in *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean*, ed. Daniel B. Rood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 14–41.

[15] José Antonio Piqueras, "Some Uncomfortable Evidence on Slavery and Capitalism," *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 30:5/6 (2020), 464–87.

[16] See on this Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Global Commerce and Economic Conscience in Europe, 1700–1900: Distance and Entanglement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

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heavily on visual media and physical evidence, such as branding irons and shackles, in their attempt to bridge the distance and to create awareness.[17]

Overseas merchants and plantation owners also had a problem with morality over distance, but here the issue was (at least before abolitionism became economically significant) the maintaining of trusting commercial relationships in the extended commercial space. Long-distance trade favoured corruption and the emergence of shadow economies. These shadow economies also functioned because they provided a livelihood for many marginalised workers.[18] This was how it was possible to find enough workers for the ships even after the prohibition of the slave trade.[19] Eighteenth-century mercantile communities sought to prevent corruption by relying as much as possible on family and "friends" in their networks, to whose sense of moral obligation they could appeal more effectively.[20] However, active control was limited, and concessions had to be made. This also becomes clear in the Caribbean plantation economy.

In her article in this special issue, Mathilde Ackermann-Koenig studies the absenteeism of French plantation owners from their estates in Saint-Domingue. Geographical distance, her investigation shows, enabled the *gérants*—the installed plantation administrators—to act largely independently of their patrons, who preferred to live in the metropole and to participate in public life there. The *gérants* sought to make their own fortune by participating in a shadow economy that built upon extensive smuggling activities. The huge shadow economy of the region was an open secret which the plantation owners did little to oppose, and which they accepted to a certain extent. Benefiting from absenteeism, new actors such as middlemen and -women, some of whom were both victims and perpetrators of slavery, emerged. The prime victims of this were the enslaved labourers, whose exploitation was even harsher under the rule of the *gérants*, as they were forced to meet the demands of both the latter and the distant plantation owners.

While the plantation was primarily about the production of commodities for the emerging world market, enslaved people managed to form their own communities and created added value in many different areas of the economy. They provided labour well beyond the plantations, in infrastructure expansion, as domestic servants, in mines, in the urban sector, on ships, and in many other positions.

Parallelism of slavery and new forms of coercive labour

While wage labour became the norm in the European metropoles, slavery coexisted with or was transformed into various new forms of coercive labour in other parts of the world,

[17] J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade 1787–1807* (London: Routledge, 1998); Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780–1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Laurel Carmichael, "Fetishism and the Moral Marketplace: How Abolitionist Sugar Boycotts in the 1790s Defined British Consumers and the West Indian 'Other'" (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2015).

[18] See Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World, Essays towards a Global Labor History*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labour, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009).

[19] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon, 2000).

[20] See, amongst others, Diogo Ramada Curto and Anthony Molho, eds., *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World*, EUI working paper HEC, No. 2002,2 (Badia Fiesolana: European University Institute, 2002); Klaus Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute im Atlantikhandel 1680–1830. Unternehmen und Familien in Hamburg, Cádiz und Bordeaux* (Munich: Beck, 2004); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009); Andreas Gestrich and Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, eds., *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society* (London: German Historical Institute, 2011); Aaron Graham, "Review Article: Mercantile Networks in the Early Modern World," *Historical Journal* 56 (2013), 279–95.

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involving further geographical areas and commercial sectors that were outside the focus of public attention.

Both anti-slavery legislation and public moralising put pressure on those involved in the slave trade, but there were ways to effectively hide one's own involvement and exploit legal loopholes. After formal abolition, the shadow economy extended into what Michael Zeuske has calls the "Hidden Atlantic" across which people were illegally shipped.[21] It was an organised smuggling system that enabled the ship owners and trading houses to make large profits and functioned so well that millions were still being trafficked to different regions of the Americas throughout the nineteenth century.[22] Today, definitions of a hidden economy often refer exclusively to illegal activities such as smuggling, that is, activities that do not generate any taxes for the state. These activities, unlike slave smuggling in the nineteenth century, are now viewed negatively in the context of state regulation.[23] At that time, the individual states profited from the system because it allowed them to continue practising slavery.[24] Furthermore, as various studies have shown, one a common, but still under-researched method to circumvent antislavery legislation was to "rent" enslaved labourers in countries that had not yet, or not fully, abolished slavery. For example, a British mining company in Cuba (Royal Copper Mines of Cobre) registered its enslaved workers under a Cuban employee and hired them back from this straw man.[25] Two British-owned mining companies (Saint John d'el Rey Company and Imperial Brazilian Mining Association), each owning around one thousand enslaved workers in Brazil, successfully lobbied in the UK to water down the 1843 Bill for the More Effective Suppression of the Slave Trade, with the effect that the envisaged prohibition of the renting of slaves was stripped from the legislation.[26] A later example is offered by the Hamburg-based trading company Hansing & Co., which in the late 1870s rented around two hundred female enslaved workers from Zanzibari owners to process its East African merchandise for export.[27] The continuation first of the slave trade and then of slavery in other regions of the world was obscured, while the search for alternatives to slave labour started as early as abolitionism gained momentum.

A project that turned out successfully from the point of view of its agents was the transport of contract workers from East Asia to colonial possessions in the Americas and in the Pacific. The scheme came into full effect in the 1840s, demonstrating the global reach of the European empires and their ability to steer and exploit labour worldwide. Although they were not enslaved, a long contract period with little opportunity to appeal meant that these indentured labourers were in a similar position to enslaved labourers and were often treated similarly. In his article, Rudolph NG looks into the Cuban case, where over 141,000 Chinese workers became employed as indentured labourers between 1847 and 1874. His meticulous study follows their traces from recruitment to employment in various parts of the Cuban economy, and also acknowledges their experiences and agency under enforced

[21] Zeuske, "Out of the Americas"; Zeuske, *Sklavenhändler, Negreros und Atlantikkreolen*.

[22] Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, http://www.slavevoyages.org/.

[23] Frederick Cooper, "Von der Sklaverei in die Prekarität? Afrikanische Arbeitsgeschichte im globalen Kontext," in *Von der Sklaverei in die Prekarität? Afrikanische Arbeitsgeschichte im globalen Kontext*, ed. Felicitas Hentschke and Andreas Eckert (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 5–30.

[24] Rafael Marquese, Tâmis Parron, and Márcia Berbel, *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790–1850* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016).

[25] Joseph G. Kelly, "The Problem of Anti-Slavery in the Age of Capital, c. 1830–1888" (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2017), 263–4.

[26] Alex Balch, Claire Hannibal, and Joe Kelly, "Westminster and the Eradication of Slavery in Business Supply Chains: Past, Present, and Future," in *Global Commerce and Economic Conscience*, ed. Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 263–84, 276–9.

[27] We know of this only through a memoir of a former employee, and later associate, of the company: Justus Strandes, *Erinnerungen and Kindheit und Jugend und an die Kaufmannszeit in Hamburg und Ostafrika, 1865–1889*, ed. Sven Tode (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Merkur, 2004), 63, 73.

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circumstances, partly transmitted to us through the *Cuba Commission Report*. NG underlines the important contribution the so-called coolies made to the Cuban economy, which is still not fully acknowledged. This case shows once again that slavery and new forms of bonded labour existed alongside each other and were by no means limited to the agricultural sector.

A similar narrative emerges from the research carried out by Silvana ANDRADE DOS SANTOS, who examines labour as a factor of production based on the example of the Todos os Santos textile factory (Velança, Bahia). The factory was built between 1845 and 1847 by businessmen who had acquired the necessary capital from the illegal slave trade, and remained the largest textile factory in Brazil until the 1870s, demonstrating that profits from the slave trade were also invested in industrial production in Brazil. However, because the work carried out was industrial work in a factory, it was assumed for a long time—and care was taken to encourage the belief—that the workers were exclusively free wage labourers employed under progressive conditions in textile production.

Following Karl Marx, slavery was long evaluated as a "lower form of human production that would disappear with the development and expansion of Western European 'industrial capitalism"' and the spread of "free" industrial labour, the form of labour attributed to capitalism.[28] However, ANDRADE DOS SANTOS's detailed research in the company archives has brought a different picture to light. Her study shows that there were a variety of forms of work in the factory and that although wage labour was widespread among the three hundred workers, it was far from being the only form of labour. The article impressively describes the living and working conditions of different workers, following recent studies that have gone beyond dividing the world into a periphery (with forms of coercive labour) and a centre (with paid "free" labour) to show the diversity of forms of labour in one place, viewing this combination as central to capitalist capital accumulation.[29]

Alongside the continuation and transformation of slavery, the long nineteenth century thus saw a "restructuring of labour," as a result of which other forms of coercive labour were used and which were not, as "orthodox Marxist theory" claims, anomalies "or "feudal" remnants in an industrialising world" but rather were, and are, inherent in global capitalism.[30] Up until the present day, as free labour agreements also show, complex power relations are still the norm worldwide, and racist and sexist discrimination widespread.[31]

Dependency and concealment

Following the global history of slavery, this volume also analyses the different reasons for, and degrees of, dependency among the workers: considering them not only as individuals but also as embedded in a social context with family and other ties.[32] Slavery is a system of extreme dependencies, although there are also different degrees of awareness of these

[28] Stephan Conerman and Michael Zeuske, "Introduction," *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 30:5/6 (2020), 448–64, 451.

[29] A. Komlosy, "Work and Labour Relations," in *Capitalism: The Reemergence of a Historical Concept*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 33–69; Pepijn Brandon, Pernille Røge, and Niklas Frykman, "Free and Unfree Labour in Atlantic and Indian Ocean Port Cities (17th–19th Century)," in "*Free and Unfree Workers in Atlantic and Indian Ocean Port Cities, c. 1700–1850*," special issue, *International Review of Social History* 27 (2019), 1–18.

[30] Manuela Boatcă, "Globale Ungleichheiten", 261. Marcel van der Linden, the founder of global labour history, argues in this vein when he analyses "free" labour as a "particular type of coerced labour." See P. Brandon, "'With the Name Changed, the Story Applies to You!' Connections between Slavery and 'Free' Labor in the Writings of Marx," in *The Lifework of a Labor Historian: Essays in Honor of Marcel van der Linden*, ed. U. Bosma and K. Hofmeester (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 47–70; Ch. Frings, "Sklaverei und Lohnarbeit bei Marx. Zur Diskussion um Gewalt und 'unfreie Arbeit' im Kapitalismus," *Prokla* 49:3 (2019), 427–48.

[31] Cooper, "Von der Sklaverei in die Prekarität?," 26.

[32] Van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, 15–37.

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dependencies in everyday life. The differences between the various forms of coercive labour were nevertheless very present for enslaved individuals, who tried to overcome, subvert, or rebel against these differences.[33] Andrade Dos Santos uncovers the hidden economy of a textile factory that presented itself as modern, but whose owners also resorted to forms of coercive labour as often as they were capable of doing so. Ng and Andrade Dos Santos show the complexity of labour exploitation in nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. Defenceless people such as orphans were employed alongside wage labourers and slaves in the factories. Within such a context, slaveholding or patronage mentalities emerged that persisted even after slavery was outlawed. Frederick Cooper has made clear why these personal-based dependencies remain successful even without formal forms of slavery:

"Unevenness is not simply a matter of layered categories: upper, middle, lower classes, stable workers vs precarious workers. It is a matter of relationships. People without resources seek patrons, and patrons seek clients. Such asymmetrical relationships are found at every level of society, from beggars who are organized by exploitative patrons, to taxi and bus drivers who depend on access and protection, to businessmen who seek a contract or a concession."[34]

With the focus less exclusively on theoretical approaches and more on the life worlds of the workers, seemingly paradoxical historical realities come to light. Contracts were used, as Ng's essay shows, to bind labourers for a certain period of time; during this period, their living conditions were very similar to slavery. It becomes apparent that even in slavery, certain groups of female slaves were able to move into niche economies—for example, by selling food and ready-made dishes in the cities to a diverse clientele.[35] Paradoxically, with the prohibition of slavery, some of these spaces closed off again.[36] Following feminist studies, reproductive and domestic labour in particular is considered a hidden economy, as in classical Marxism it was not seen as labour producing surplus value. Thus made invisible, this gendered activity went hand in hand with the imposition of industrial capitalism and is therefore particularly evident in our period of study of the transition from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century.[37]

Imperial disguise

Abolitionism sought to replace the slave trade with "legitimate commerce" and to overcome the institution of slavery; its moral campaign, however, did not oppose colonialism.

[33] Andreas Eckert, *Geschichte der Sklaverei: von der Antike bis ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2021).

[34] Frederick Cooper, "From Enslavement to Precarity? The Labour Question in African History," in *The Political Economy of Everyday Life in Africa: Beyond the Margins*, ed. Wale Adebanwi (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2017), 135–56, 150.

[35] Melina Teubner, "Street Food, Urban Space, and Gender: Working on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro (1830–1879)," *International Review of Social History* 27 (2019), 229–54; Mariana P. Candido and Adam Jones, *African Women in the Atlantic World: Property, Vulnerability & Mobility, 1660–1880* (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2019); Selma Pantoja, "A Dimensão Atlântica das Quitandeiras," in *Diálogos Oceânicos: Minas Gerais e as Novas Abordagens para uma História do Império Ultramarino Português*, ed. Júnia Ferreira Furtado (Belo Horizonte, Brazil: UFMG, 2001), 45–68; Vanessa S. Oliveira, *Slave Trade and Abolition: Gender, Commerce and Economic Transition in Luanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021).

[36] Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Henrique Espada Lima and Fabiane Popinigis, "Maids, Clerks, and the Shifting Landscape of Labor Relations in Rio de Janeiro, 1830s–1880s," *International Review of Social History* 62 (2017), 45–73.

[37] Carola Lentz, *Familie, Arbeit und soziale Mobilität: Ghanaische Perspektiven* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 11; Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2011).

This becomes clear not least from the early example of Sierra Leone, where a project to settle British and North American Africans developed into a full-blown colonial enterprise.[38] Although it is not possible to draw a direct line from the abolitionism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the colonial expansionism and new imperialism of the late nineteenth century, pathways can be seen also in the increasing presence and activities of the British Royal Navy along the African coasts. In the 1880s and 1890s, the imperial powers used anti-slavery as their primary justification for establishing colonial rule in Africa. This was effective both at the international and the national level, where the anti-slavery movement was a mobilising force.[39] However, most important for our context, the rhetorically pompous fight against slavery often turned quieter once colonial administrations were established in Africa. Against the primacy of economic benefit for the metropole and fears of labour shortage, the colonial state usually had little incentive to strongly promote anti-slavery measures or actively implement abolitionist legislation. One better studied example is that of German East Africa, where slavery was never fully abolished under German rule.[40] Alongside clusters of persistent slavery, new forms of compulsory labour were introduced—for example, the so-called communal *shamba* scheme in German East Africa.[41]

In their contribution to this special issue, Felicitas BECKER, Nives KINUNDA and Salvatory NYANTO explore the long end of slavery and its aftermath in continental East Africa. The study shows that the spread of the capitalist world economy, while not irrelevant to developments at the local level, does not offer a conclusive explanation with regard to the end of slavery in East Africa. Rather, regionally varying economic dynamics, differing opportunities for self-emancipation at the community and household levels, and political events must be taken into account. The analysis also foregrounds the utmost importance of gender relations in the study of economies of slavery, and slavery's transformations and afterlives. Even after emancipation, negotiations of status occurred at the household level, and were only indirectly related to market forces.[42] That a large majority of the enslaved workforce on the East African mainland was female has long been overlooked and ignored in historiography, as research focused on the better documented slavery on the coast—a fact that underscores the importance of including the hinterlands of commercial hubs, and seemingly remote areas, in the global study of slavery. Equally important, as this collection of essays shows, is to look into "hidden economies" where slavery continued despite formal abolition or where new forms of coercive labour developed, and not to obscure slavery in historical narratives.[43]

[38] Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Paul E. Lovejoy, and Suzanne Schwarz, eds., *Slavery Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2015).

[39] See on this, amongst others, Daniel Laqua, "The Tensions of Internationalism: Transnational Anti-Slavery in the 1880s and 1890s," *International History Review* 33 (2011), 705–26; Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012); Fabian Klose, *"In the Cause of Humanity": Eine Geschichte der humanitären Intervention im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019).

[40] Jan-Georg Deutsch, *Emancipation Without Abolition in German East Africa, c. 1884–1914* (Oxford: Currey, 2006).

[41] See Rainer Tetzlaff, *Koloniale Entwicklung und Ausbeutung. Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutsch-Ostafrikas 1885–1914* (Berlin: Duncker u. Humblot, 1970), 137–9; Gilbert Clement Kamana Gwassa, *The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War 1905–1907* (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe, 2005).

[42] Cf. Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East/Central Africa* (New York: Barber, 1993); Jan-Georg Deutsch, "Notes on the Rise of Slavery & Social Change in Unyamwezi, c. 1860–1900," in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, ed. Henri Médard, and Shane Doyle (Oxford: Currey, 2007), 76–110.

[43] Cf. Berg and Hudson, *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution*, 3.

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